

FATHERHOOD NEWSLETTER

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March begins spring, and as we see temperatures begin to rise we hope to see COVID-19 case rates fall. Rising temperatures brings more sunshine, and more opportunities to get outside and enjoy getting out and engaging in play with your children. We hope you will be building many great memories with them playing together!

Please connect with us!

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Fathers reading makes a difference

There is universal agreement that reading regularly to your children from the beginning gives them a great foundation for language and literacy development. There is research showing that **fathers specifically reading with their children has enhanced benefits**. This study examined 500 low-income fathers in the United States and how frequently, and in what ways they read to their children. While mothers often highlight details in a book and ask children to count objects or colors, **Fathers would link events in the book to the child's experience**. As an example, if there was a ladder in a book fathers would often mention the last time they used a ladder in their work or at home. This is a unique way that fathers have been shown to interact with their children. Additionally, reading with their children can help with the development of fine motor skills such as when holding the book or turning pages. It was also found that **fathers were more likely to bring interactive elements into their reading such as acting out portions of a book** or using "sound effects" when there were dynamic scenes (such as characters who went underwater or an airplane taking off on a runway). This study identifies another unique contribution fathers can make in their children's lives.

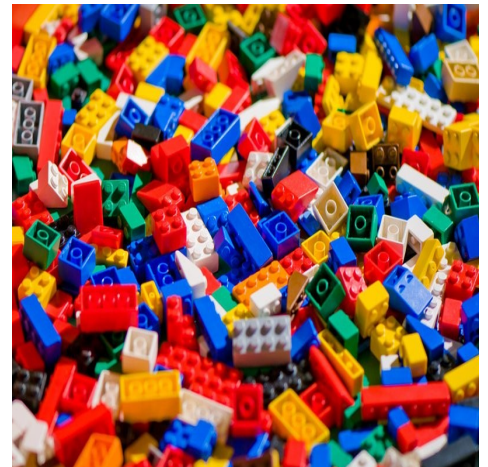
We Recognize fathers with Developmental Disabilities

March is the official month for recognition of individuals with developmental disabilities as started by President Reagan in 1987. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), developmental disabilities are defined as impairments in physical, learning, language, or behavioral areas. This includes (among others) cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders, hearing loss, vision impairment, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. There are many fathers throughout Oklahoma who experience one of these conditions, and we want to recognize them under the full spectrum of fatherhood. They are our brothers, neighbors, friends, and family.



Brick Universe Lego Fan Convention

With spring break comes the search for activities and fun things to do during the break. Take advantage of this LEGO fan convention to see amazing LEGO creations on display, build your own creations, and purchase mini-figures, LEGO sets, and other accessories at this event. Held from March 12th to March 13th at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City, 1 Myriad Gardens, Oklahoma City, OK 73102. Prices are \$18 for the day of admission, and online admission in advance is \$14.99.



New dad tool for your toolbox for February: Bottle-feeding a breastfed baby

1. When do I feed my baby? Rather than feeding them on a schedule, babies should be fed when their cues indicate hunger

2. What is the best way to hold my baby when feeding? It is important to avoid letting the baby drink from a bottle lying down, as this can lead to increased frequency of ear infections. Also, hold your baby when not feeding to avoid the baby learning to want to eat every time they are held.

3. How long do I feed my baby? Feed your baby 10-20 minutes at a time to mimic the breastfeeding experience. It is important not to let the infant feed longer than this so as not to let their stomach get over-filled and risk them vomiting

4. Is there a specific way to give the baby the bottle? Yes, make sure to gently allow the infant to draw nipple into mouth rather than pushing the nipple into the infant's mouth, so that baby controls when the feeding begins. Stroke baby's lips from top to bottom with the nipple to illicit a rooting response of a wide open mouth, and then allow the baby to "accept" the nipple rather than poking it in.

5. Should I pause when feeding? It Yes, try to encourage frequent pauses while the baby drinks from the bottle to mimic the breastfeeding mother's let-down patterns. This discourages the baby from guzzling the bottle and will minimize risk of nipple confusion between the bottle and the breast.

6. Should I make sure my baby finishes their bottle? No, in fact you only want to feed the baby so long as they are continuing to give feeding cues (lip smacking, opening and closing the mouth). Make sure not to aggressively encourage the baby to finish the last bit of milk in the bottle by such measures as forcing the nipple into the mouth, massaging the infant's jaw or throat, or rattling the nipple around in the infant's mouth. If baby is drowsing off and releasing the bottle nipple before the bottle is empty that means baby is done; don't reawaken the baby to "finish."

Resources for fathers with children with developmental disabilities ⁴

In recognizing fathers who have children with developmental disabilities, we want to highlight the great work of the Oklahoma Family Network. This nonprofit focuses on connecting families in these communities with each other to offer peer-to-peer support. In addition to matching families together who have been through similar experiences for support, they have links to support groups, resources for families, and an annual conference that brings professionals, families, and advocates together called “joining forces”. This conference will be held virtually this year Friday March 25th, from 9:00-3:00 pm. You can register here: tinyurl.com/Joining-Forces



Need Resources?

Throughout the state you can call 211 or go to <https://www.211oklahoma.org> for help with housing, food, utilities, mental health, transportation, COVID-19 information, or other needs.



REFERENCES

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